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RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000958

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DEPT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/12/2016
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: DAY-TIME CURFEW IN KATHMANDU LIFTED; CURFEW
REMAINS ELSEWHERE

REF: A. KATHMANDU 948

[1](#)B. KATHAMNDU 944

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (U) On April 12, day seven of the seven-party alliance nationwide general strike and demonstrations, Nepalis across the country again took to the street to participate in pro-democracy protests. Following April 8-11 day-time curfews, which protesters had increasingly disregarded, the government did not issue a day-time curfew in Kathmandu on April 12, though the government did invoke day-time curfews for Pokhara, Chitwan, and Butwal, all cities with large and sometimes violent protests on April 11. The streets of Kathmandu were quieter than the previous few days, with fewer violent confrontations with security forces. The April 10 State Department statement on Nepal received favorable, widespread media coverage. End Summary.

Kathmandu Quieter On April 12

[1](#)2. (C) Following four days of day-time curfews in the Kathmandu Valley, the government did not issue a day-time curfew in Kathmandu on April 12, although many people anticipated it would do so, and the police kept the option open. The absence of a curfew allowed many citizens to go out of their houses for the first time in almost a week to get supplies and to operate small businesses. Despite April 12 being the seventh day of the Parties' indefinite general strike, Emboffs observed about one-third of shops open, and some taxis, motorcycles and micro-buses on the streets. However, many other shops remained closed, and most vehicles chose not to travel the roads, either due to fear of ongoing violence, or in support of the Parties' general strike. Though police arrested dozens of Party members and civil society activists, Kathmandu was relatively quiet on April 12, and there was a noticeable absence of security force personnel compared to previous days. (Comment: This could be the result of mutual fatigue, as both demonstrators and security forces have been looking exhausted of late. Some

people speculated that youths who had been on the streets protesting on previous days had stayed home to watch the Nepali national soccer team play Sri Lanka. End comment.)

Demonstrations Continue Throughout The Country

¶3. (C) On April 12, demonstrators protested in many cities throughout Nepal, sometimes clashing violently with security forces, who reacted in kind. While not issuing a day-time curfew in Kathmandu, the government issued a fourth day of day-time curfews in Pokhara (western hills), Bharatpur (central terai) and Butwal (western terai), all cities which had seen large and sometimes violent protests on April 11. A contact in Rupandehi District (western terai) told Emboff that security forces on April 12 killed one protester in neighboring Nawalparasi District, a mostly rural district known to be a Maoist hotbed. After the thousands of demonstrators witnessed the shooting, they torched the residences of the District Development Committee Chairman and Mayor. Our contact told us he had never seen such large demonstrations in Bhairawa and Butwal (both cities are in Rupandehi District). He stated that young and old, men and women, and people from many different backgrounds and professions joined in the protest in Bhairawa. He noted that city dwellers who did not participate in the rally lined the roads to greet the protesters with applause. The situation was more tense in Butwal, where he reported that more than 1,000 security forces tried to control approximately 10,000 protesters. He explained that security forces opened fire into the crowd in Butwal on April 11, injuring at least nine demonstrators, but noted that demonstrations on April 12 were more peaceful. He commented that, following the Maoist declaration to attack royal statues (ref B), protesters damaged a number of royal statues, which subsequently

disappeared. Locals speculated that security forces took the statues for safe-keeping.

¶4. (C) Similarly, an RNA contact in Bharatpur, Chitwan District told Emboff that there were about 8-10,000 demonstrators present there every day. He opined that "nothing can be predicted about what will happen next." He stated that he had "very good relations" with the local leaders of the major political parties, and commented that they called to update him on the situation. He pointed out that the leaders themselves were surprised at the large number of people turning up to protest. He explained that the local leaders were "very confident" that Maoists had massively infiltrated the protests and that the political parties did not control the crowds.

Maoists Lurking Out West

¶5. (C) Several people reported heightened Maoist activities in the western terai. Our Rupandehi contact noted that the Maoists who attacked Butwal on April 7 were still in the area and were forcing villagers to go to the cities to join in the demonstrations. To counter the Maoist plan to block highways (ref b), he commented, the RNA was patrolling the major east-west highway by ground and air to keep it open, including refueling a RNA helicopter as often as twenty times in Bhairawa on April 11. Our RNA contact in Chitwan District termed the ongoing situation in Bharatpur as "tense," and said that RNA troops were on standby to be mobilized if the situation were to get out of control of the Armed Police Force and the Civil Police. At night, they were on standby against Maoist attacks. He highlighted that the Maoists were calling in threats to the RNA that they may attack it "on any given day." He admitted that troops were tired and that this was "alarming." Given the constant duty without rest and the current threats, he continued, the picture was "not very positive."

No Deaths, But Dozens Critically Injured On April 11

¶6. (C) In contrast to the relative calm in Kathmandu on April 12, more details emerged about the April 11 violent clashes between police and protesters. While police reported no protest-related deaths on April 11, in some of the bloodiest violence seen so far in the seven days of pro-democracy demonstrations, police used tear gas, fired rubber bullets, and charged stone-throwing protesters with batons in Gongabu, a part of Kathmandu northwest of the ring road (ref A). The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) told Emboff that Gongabu had been the scene of violent demonstrations the last four days. They explained that violence escalated on April 11 when 2,000 demonstrators clashed with 500 Armed Police Force, backed by 100 Royal Nepalese Army forces. The Kathmandu Post carried photos of police firing on protesters from the private house of a policeman on the front page, and reported over 300 protesters were injured. (Note: One Embassy contact noted that the protesters' wounds pictured in newspapers were consistent with rubber bullets, as opposed to rifle rounds. End not.) OHCHR reported that police fired over 60 shots into the crowd, some of which were live rounds. OHCHR interviewed two doctors, who estimated they treated over two hundred people between them, including some injured security force personnel, at a first aid station set up at the protest site. The doctors treated five victims with gunshot wounds, including one man who had nine buckshot pellets in his chest in a manner indicating the security forces fired the pellets at point-blank range. The doctors also said they treated a man whom police had hit in the eye. OHCHR also reported that 5,000 protesters clashed, sometimes violently, with security forces in Kirtipur, an area of Kathmandu southwest of the ring road near the nation's largest school, Tribhuvan University. The Federation of Nepalese Journalists, an umbrella organization of journalists in Nepal, reported on April 11 that nationwide, the government had arrested over 111 journalists in the course of the general strike.

USG Statements Receive Wide Media Coverage

¶7. (C) The U.S. State Department Spokesperson's April 10 statement on Nepal received widespread coverage on the front page of most English language and vernacular papers. The April 12 Kathmandu Post headlined "King's rule total failure: U.S." Similarly, the Himalayan Times headlined, "United States says King's rule a total failure." Many Embassy Party contacts thanked the U.S. for the statement (septel).

Comment

¶8. (C) While the streets of Kathmandu were a bit calmer on April 12 than on preceding days, the situation remains highly unpredictable. To some extent, both sides -- protesters and security forces -- may be worn out and resting for a bit for the next round. Mass protests are inherently volatile, and it is difficult to predict where or when violence will next break out. Moreover, the authorities give little impression of consistency or coherent planning when they announce curfews at the last minute or threaten, as they are privately doing now, imposition of a state of emergency.

MORIARTY